

# **GLOUCESTER RUGBY**

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2015**

**THE REC – WEST COUNTRY CHALLENGE CUP**

**GLOUCESTER LEAVE THE REC FRUSTRATED AFTER 30-21  
PRE-SEASON DEFEAT**

**BATH RUGBY 30 GLOUCESTER RUGBY 21**

**Match Report By Duncan Wood**

Gloucester paid a dear price for not making more of their scoring opportunities at the Rec on Saturday evening as Bath battled their way to a 30-21 West Country Challenge Cup win.

It was a frustrating evening for Gloucester who could so easily have come away with the win but were left to rue not making more of their scoring opportunities.

In both halves, the Cherry and Whites spent long period camped on the Bath line. Countless five metre scrums and lineouts were taken, but Gloucester went more than an hour between their first and second tries whereas Bath were simply more clinical.

The home side definitely made the most of Gloucester's errors, turnovers leading to two of their tries and a forward pass leading up to the penalty try.

So plenty to work on for Gloucester, particularly their attack from close range but another valuable 80 minutes of preseason rugby have been put in the bank with just one more match remaining before the season proper kicks off.

That game, against Exeter at the Memorial Stadium next Saturday, will be used to iron out as many wrinkles as possible as the season opener against Newcastle will require the Cherry and Whites to be clinical than they were this evening.

The last time these two teams met at the Rec, it was the final regular game of the 2014-15 Aviva Premiership season. It's only just over four months ago, but seems like a lifetime.

Today's match, the third for both teams in the inaugural West Country Challenge Cup, had a very different feel to it although the venue and weather conditions looked the same.

Gloucester had an early let off when Leroy Houston's long pass off his left hand to Semesa Rokodoguni was ruled forward to deny the England winger a try, but Tom Homer opened the scoring with a fifth minute penalty.

Gloucester were struggling to get into the game in these early stages, and weren't helping themselves with some indiscretions. The restart out on the full, followed by a penalty conceded at the scrum gave Bath great field position and they took full advantage.

The catch and drive took time to set, but eventually got going, inching towards the Gloucester line. However, scrum-half Chris Cook surprised everyone by taking the ball and going blindside to put Jeff Williams in for the game's opening try.

However, Gloucester hit straight back thanks to the quick wits of Richard Hibbard. The hooker saw the ball unprotected at a Bath ruck, snatched possession and flipped a lovely reverse pass for Rob Cook to score. Billy Twelvetrees converted.

The Cherry and Whites had a chance to take the lead, but were held up over the line after a well-executed lineout close to the Bath line and were then frustratingly turned over from the subsequent five metre scrum.

Charlie Sharples then a real chance to stretch his legs as Gloucester took advantage of a Bath turnover while on the attack. But Tom Homer had the angle and just got across to make the try saving tackle.

A good spell followed for Gloucester but they couldn't capitalise and were hit with a real sucker punch on 31 minutes as Bath pounced on a Gloucester turnover, spun the ball left and Jeff Williams broke a tackle to score in the corner.

It was a setback for Gloucester having exerted so much pressure only to concede. Bath immediately looked to press home their advantage as half time approached and it took some dogged defence from the Gloucester pack to keep them at bay.

That was it for the scoring for the first half and Bath went in with a 13-7 lead. It had been a fairly even encounter to this point, both teams having enjoyed decent spells of superiority.

The home side's lead was very much down to Gloucester not having taken any points from a sustained period of pressure around the half hour mark, before Williams excellent finish at the other end rubbed salt into the wound.

But, as the floodlights came on the Rec, there was still everything to play for although the strengths of the respective benches could well come in to the equation. Indeed, Gloucester made four changes at half time, whereas Bath made none.

Amongst the newcomers were new half backs in James Hook and Willi Heinz, but it was the latter's forward pass that gave Bath great field position. Tom Savage was yellow carded in the defensive effort that ensued, and with superiority of numbers, Bath forced the penalty try. Homer converted for 20-7.

It was a controversial call by referee Wigglesworth as Leroy Houston had lost control of the ball before the whistle blew and Gloucester were already counter attacking. Oh, for a Television Match Official . . .

The pattern of the first half was copied as Gloucester then spent a long time hammering away at the Bath line without being able to get over the whitewash.

Eventually, however, Joe Batley burrowed his way over and James Hook converted. Gloucester were back in it at 20-14 but the door was promptly slammed shut as Tom Homer booted a long range penalty before another turnover allowed Jonathan Evans to scamper over.

Gloucester kept at it and did have the final word as the unlikely figure of Olly Thorley touched down after a rolling maul but it proved to be little more than a consolation.

#### Bath Rugby Lineups

Tom Homer; Semesa Rokoduguni, Matt Banahan, Ollie Devoto, Jeff Williams; Kyle Eastmond, Chris Cook; Nick Auterac, Ross Batty, Henry Thomas; Dave Attwood (c), Tom Ellis; Max Northcote-Green, Guy Mercer, Leroy Houston

#### Replacements

Tom Dunn, Max Lahiff, Beno Obano, Kane Palma-Newport, Chris Dicomidis, Will Britton, Sydney Blackmore, Jonathan Evans, Rory Jennings, Brett Herron, Max Clark, Luke Arscott, Zach Mercer

#### Gloucester Rugby Lineups

##### Forwards

Nick Wood, John Afoa, Yann Thomas, Nicky Thomas, Paddy McAllister, Paul Doran-Jones, Richard Hibbard, Tom Lindsay, Tom Savage, Elliott Stooke, Tom Hicks, Jacob Rowan, Dan Thomas, Gareth Evans, Alex Craig, Joe Batley, Lewis Ludlow

##### Backs

Rob Cook, Steve McColl, Steph Reynolds, Charlie Sharples, Henry Purdy, Olly Thorley, Bill Meakes, Mark Atkinson, Billy Twelvetrees (capt), Mat Protheroe, James Hook, Callum Braley, Willi Heinz